

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 14 March 1978

CG NIDC 78/060C

DIA review(s) completed.

NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION
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Approved For Release 2006/03/17 : CIA-RDP79T00975A030600010024-5

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 14 March 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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ISRAEL-LEBANON: Mobilization

25X1 [] //The Israelis are apparently making extensive military preparations to retaliate for Saturday's terrorist attack near Tel Aviv. Israel could move against targets in Lebanon at any time.//

25X1 [] //US military attaches in Tel Aviv report that the Israelis have moved a substantial number of troops to the eastern Lebanese border in the area of Qiryat Shemona - Baniyas and have closed the east-west highway running along the border from the Mediterranean. They have also mobilized some army reservists, including artillery troops, and have canceled some training courses scheduled for yesterday and today.//

25X1 [] The Israeli preparations appear to be significantly more extensive than those following serious terrorist operations in the past and for Israel's incursion into southeastern Lebanon last fall. The Israelis are apparently preparing to launch large-scale air attacks, probably against terrorist headquarters, bases, and supply depots in southern Lebanon and perhaps to support ground operations. All fighter aircraft at one Israeli airbase have already been loaded for airstrikes and are awaiting clear weather.

25X1 [] Israeli troop concentrations suggest that Israel may also be preparing for quick, limited ground operations into Lebanon at various points near the border. The mobilization of artillery reservists and the movement of artillery to the border area may be to support such operations and to shell Palestinian and terrorist positions in southern Lebanon. From sites in northeastern Israel, long-range artillery could reach targets a few kilometers south of Jazzin, and from the central and eastern border area could strike targets north of Tyre. []

ISRAEL: PLO Expectations

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[redacted] *Most Palestinians seem to approve of the terrorist action on Saturday; the reaction of Arab Governments has been mixed.*

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[redacted] //Palestinians generally appear to be "proud" of the terrorist operation, despite the threat of Israeli retaliation, [redacted] George Habash, the leader of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, praised the operation, and militant Fatah leader Salah Khalaf is said to have threatened further attacks.//

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[redacted] Fatah leaders probably hoped the raid would boost their stock in the Palestinian movement. They probably intended it primarily to underscore the Palestinian demand for control of the West Bank and Gaza, and they may have believed they had little to lose in view of Israeli reluctance to give up these areas.

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[redacted] The Syrian media have cautiously praised the terrorist raid as a "bold" action, but the government appears concerned that an Israeli retaliatory strike in Lebanon will increase Syria's problems in maintaining stability there. [redacted]

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FRANCE: First Election Results

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[redacted] *The results of the first round of the French legislative election on Sunday clearly disappointed the Socialist Party, which showed less strength than opinion polls had led*

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[redacted]

it to expect. The official results, based on returns from all but one of the 491 districts, show the alliance of Communists, Socialists, and Left Radicals with 45.1 percent, other leftist parties with 4.4 percent, the center-right with 48.4 percent, and the ecologists at 2.1 percent. Even if a portion of the ecologists' vote is allocated to the Left, the alliance's tally rises to just over 50 percent--far from the decisive mandate it had hoped to obtain.

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[redacted] The parties of the leftist alliance quickly agreed at a summit last night to defer in the second round to the best-placed leftist candidate in each district. The three parties also agreed on joint campaign appearances this week and on "the main points" of a governing program. The Socialists and Communists, however, have been blaming each other for the Left's failure to make a better showing.

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[redacted] The Socialists' share of the vote, 22.5 percent, was an increase of about four points over their performance in 1973 and they came close to winning the 7 million votes they had set as their goal. The Communists, with 20.5 percent, dropped a position against the Socialists.

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[redacted] The parties of the present governing coalition are more confident than they had been for some time, but party leaders have commented in guardedly optimistic terms in order to keep their supporters from relaxing before the second round. "Nothing is lost," observed Prime Minister Barre, "but nothing is yet won." The coalition parties will probably cooperate well for the second round--nine out of every 10 of their voters say they will switch their vote to the better-placed candidate on the second ballot.

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[redacted] Although there was some shift in the relative strengths of the center-right parties--the Gaullists polled 22.6 percent to 23.9 for the Giscardian groups--the Gaullists remain the largest single party in the government and in the nation. On election night, Gaullist leader Jacques Chirac hastened to note that his party polled double that of the Republicans and claimed that the Gaullists were primarily responsible for stemming the drift to the left.

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[] The Gaullists have the governing coalition's leading candidate in 125 districts. Even if they win all of them, however, they will have lost about 20 of the seats they now hold.

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[] President Giscard's moderate and measured address on election eve may have been partly responsible for the shift away from the left, especially among the 6 million new voters of all ages. The turnout of over 83 percent was the largest since 1936. []

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BRIEF

Guatemala

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[] //The Guatemalan House of Deputies yesterday selected former Defense Minister Lucas as the next President. Lucas had won a plurality of the popular vote on 5 March, but because he did not gain an absolute majority the House had to choose between him and his nearest competitor, former chief of government Peralta Azurdia. Lucas obtained 35 votes in the 61-seat House; supporters of his two opponents in the election walked out in protest.//

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[] //Some observers believe that widespread suspicions of vote fraud will raise questions about the legitimacy of Lucas' victory. []

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[] //Peralta Azurdia has repeatedly warned that he will exhort his followers to violence to challenge a Lucas victory. A demonstration took place in Guatemala City last night, and there will probably be other, violent demonstrations but--because there is no significant organized military support for Peralta Azurdia--the government should be able to control the situation until Lucas takes office on 1 July. []

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